



General Management Plan *NEWSLETTER UPDATE*



A WORD from the Superintendent

You are invited to participate in the planning and preservation of Little River Canyon National Preserve (Preserve). We are beginning to develop a general management plan (GMP) to set long-term directions for the overall management and development of the Preserve for the next 15 to 20 years. A general management plan and environmental impact statement (GMP/EIS) will provide essential guidance and direction for attaining desired future conditions, visitor experiences, and operational principles for the resources at the preserve. The plan should be completed in the next two years.

The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 requires the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare a GMP/EIS for every area that it administers. Several years ago, a GMP process was started; and a draft GMP/EIS was produced in 1999. Due to a shift in Preserve management priorities the draft plan was never finalized. The background research and information completed for the 1999 draft plan will be used with any new information gathered. The earlier draft provides a solid foundation from which to expand. New efforts are needed for public involvement, development of management alternatives, and analysis of environmental impacts.

We are looking forward to working with you to develop a GMP that will recognize the connections visitors have had with Little River Canyon National Preserve over the years and that will continue to protect and enhance the Preserve's resources and visitor experiences. We hope you will join us to express your thoughts, ideas, and vision so that together we can make the Preserve a wonderful resource for the future.

John Bundy
Superintendent
Little River Canyon National Preserve

Little River Canyon National Preserve

What is a General Management Plan?

A GMP will lay a foundation for the long-term direction of the Preserve. It provides a vision for the future and a practical framework for decision making. It represents the broadest level of planning conducted by the NPS. The plan also provides general guidance on how to best protect cultural and natural resources, how to provide for quality visitor experiences, and how to manage visitation and visitor use. It involves identifying goals based on the legislative intent that established the preserve, analyzing existing conditions and future possibilities, and determining the best course of action to accomplish these goals. A GMP does not include design, resolve all issues, or guarantee funding. Rather, it describes the general path the NPS intends to follow in managing sites such as Little River Canyon National Preserve over a 15 to 20 year period.

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, an EIS will be prepared with the GMP. The GMP/EIS will identify significant issues and concerns facing management of the Preserve, present a reasonable range of management alternatives, and analyze the effects of the alternatives.

Public involvement is a key component in the preparation of the GMP/EIS. This newsletter provides information on the planning process and how you can be involved.



What is General Management Planning?

A core team of Preserve staff and NPS planning professionals is coordinating the GMP for Little River Canyon National Preserve. Participation by the Preserve staff, Preserve partners and neighbors, and the general public will be crucial to the plan's success.

The NPS strives to maintain an up-to-date GMP for each unit of the National Park System. Planning in the National Park System is organized around three primary questions:

WHY was this park established (what is its overall mission)?

WHAT is the vision for the future of this place (what kind of place do we want it to be)?

HOW do we accomplish our vision (what actions are needed to achieve the desired future conditions)?

General management planning, as suggested by its name, provides only general guidance about the best way to achieve the resource protection and visitor experience goals it recommends. Specific details regarding facility construction, interpretive program development, and maintenance techniques are examined in much greater detail during subsequent implementation planning and design processes.



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How is the Planning Process Conducted?

There are typically four steps in the general management planning process: information gathering; alternative development and analysis; preparation and publication of a draft GMP/EIS for public review and comment; and revision and publication of a final GMP/EIS.

General management planning is conducted by an interdisciplinary team of NPS managers and technical experts who consult with other knowledgeable persons inside and outside the NPS and with the general public. The planning team first studies the legislation establishing the Preserve, the body of laws and policies directing management of the National Park System, any specific administrative commitments, and special mandates that affect how the Preserve is managed. These legal and administrative commitments are referred to as *musts* in GMPs.

Once these *musts* are clearly understood, the planning team examines the Preserve's purpose, and significance statements to ensure that they adequately represent legislative intent, provide a sound foundation for decision making at the Preserve, and reflect the overall values of the general public. In addition, the planning team identifies the range of goals and objectives that Preserve staff, technical experts, current and potential visitors, other governmental agencies, traditional users, and regional residents want the Preserve to achieve. The broad range of optional goals and objectives are collectively referred to as *wants*.

The most appropriate mix of these *wants* will be determined using the best information available after a systematic analysis of resource values and land and water uses. Management alternatives will then be developed and potential environmental impacts related to those alternatives will be rigorously explored.

Purpose and Significance of the Preserve

Purpose statements provide the foundation for a site's management and use and reaffirm the reasons why it was established as a unit of the National Park System. They provide a rationale against which alternatives for managing the Preserve may be measured. Finally, they help neighbors, visitors, and other users understand the framework in which managers make decisions.

The purposes of Little River Canyon National Preserve are:

- To protect and preserve the natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of the Little River Canyon area in DeKalb and Cherokee Counties, Alabama.
- To provide for the protection and public enjoyment of the resources.

Little River Canyon National Preserve

Significance statements identify the resources and values that are central to managing the Preserve and express the importance of the Preserve to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements describe the Preserve's distinctiveness and help place it in regional and national contexts. Understanding the Preserve's significance helps managers make decisions that preserve resources and values for future generations.

Little River Canyon National Preserve is significant because:

- The area offers exceptional opportunities for recreation and public use and enjoyment for biking, camping, horseback riding, world class whitewater boating, rock climbing, and natural and historical related activities.
- The Preserve lies at the southern limits of the Cumberland Plateau, contributing to significant biological diversity including habitat for a unique assemblage of plants and animals unparalleled in the region.
- The Preserve contains some of the most rugged and outstanding canyon scenery in the southeastern United States.
- The area possesses exceptional value in illustrating and interpreting the theme of river systems in the Appalachian Plateaus.

What We Heard From You

More than 50 people participated in public open house meetings held in Centre and Fort Payne in August and September 2005. These meetings produced a wide range of ideas and suggestions about what you want to happen at the Preserve.

Many people shared their ideas about appropriate visitor recreational opportunities. You told us you would like to have:

- More trails into the canyon/trail from end to end of canyon
- More bike trails and a trail along Little River Rim Road
- More tent camp sites
- Dedicated horse trails and camps
- Dedicated hiking trails
- Low impact activities such as kayaking, hiking, and climbing be allowed to continue unregulated
- Opportunities for solitude

A wide range of opinions were expressed about different ways to protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Preserve. Your ideas include:

- Remove non-native plants to help native species flourish
- Put bridges over creeks on through roads to protect the water from erosion and pollution
- Continue to monitor and be proactive with efforts to keep water quality high
- More controlled burns in the management area to foster healthy wildlife and plant life
- More programs to educate the public on how to protect water quality and endangered species



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Facilities were also mentioned as an important part of the visitor experience at the Preserve. In particular you told us:

- More restrooms are needed
- Additional parking is needed
- The field school needs to be completed
- A small food service area would be convenient
- A ranger station near the canyon would be beneficial

Quite a few of you had concerns about safety in the Preserve. Some suggestions for improving safety are:

- Install a telephone at strategic locations to call for help in case of an emergency
- Have a check in system for boat users to make sure all are accounted for at the end of the day
- Add guard rails at dangerous locations along the falls and canyon and install more signs explaining the danger of cliffs and water
- Permission to allow climbers' coalition to repair anchors and add new routes for safer climbing

Working in conjunction with its many partners, the NPS planning team will draw upon your recommendations to formulate a range of alternative management concepts. The NPS welcomes your continued involvement in the planning process and encourages you to keep sending us your good thoughts and ideas about how to best manage the Preserve.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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*The National Park Service cares for
the special places saved by the
American people so that all may
experience our heritage.*

What Happens Next?

Your ideas and suggestions about the management of the Preserve resources and visitor experiences will be used to develop draft management alternatives. We anticipate being able to share these with you sometime in the Winter of 2006. At that time, we will again welcome your input about our alternatives in writing and at public meetings.

TIME FRAME	ACTIVITY	PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT
Summer 2005	Initial Project and Public/Stakeholder Meetings Team members collect and analyze relevant data and public input needed to support the planning effort.	~ Newsletter ~ Attend public meetings ~ Give us your ideas and comments
Fall 2005	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives Using staff and public input, the team explores what the Preserve's future should look like and proposes a range of reasonable alternatives.	~ Newsletter ~ Attend public meetings ~ Give us your ideas and comments
Spring 2006	Prepare a Draft Document A Draft GMP/EIS is published.	~ Attend public meetings ~ Give us your ideas and comments
Winter 2007	Publish Final Document Based on review and comment by the National Park Service and the public, the team revises the GMP/EIS and distributes a final plan. The plan is approved in a published record of decision.	~ Read the final plan
Next 15-20 years	Implement the Approved Plan After the Record of Decision is issued, and as funding allows, the GMP is implemented.	~ Work with the Preserve to implement the plan.

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